

I don't want to hear about people coming to the floor and talking about national security when they are leaving all these positions vacant.

Now, let me specifically address the nominees that we are voting on. I want to express my support for the nominations of Daniel Kritenbrink to be the Assistant Secretary of State for East Asia and the Pacific. Whoa. China.

Karen Donfried to be the Assistant Secretary of State for Europe and Eurasian Affairs. Oh, we are trying to have a strong transatlantic alliance. We are talking about Ukraine, Belarus.

Monica Medina to be the Assistant Secretary of State for Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs—Scientific Affairs. Yeah, COVID.

Mary Catherine Phee to be the Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs. We are having a huge challenge. I have been privileged to meet two of the African Presidents here in the last couple of days since they are here for U.N. Week. China is all over Africa. We need an Assistant Secretary who is engaged in the continent of Africa to be promoting the views of America's democracy, human rights, rule of law, investment, trade, and opportunity. We are nowhere there.

Todd Robinson to be the Assistant Secretary of State for International Narcotics and Law Enforcement. You know, I hear speeches about fentanyl; I agree. Wouldn't it be nice to have the Assistant Secretary of State to work hemispherically and beyond to make sure that we don't get more fentanyl into our country?

And Jessica Lewis to be the Assistant Secretary of State for Political-Military Affairs. If ever we needed someone who is engaged on the conduct of political and military affairs and how that faces national security challenges, it is now.

These are the people we are voting on. These are the people who overwhelmingly came out of the committee on either unanimous or bipartisan votes. These are superbly qualified nominees, and I have, if it is not obvious, a very deep frustration about them languishing on the floor for weeks—weeks—due to Republican holds. And I have a frustration that we have not been able to more precipitously move people to the committee to bring them to the floor.

We have close to 100 nominations for the State Department and USAID that are pending. That is a crisis number. These nominations include positions and ambassadorships to countries throughout Latin America and Africa: places where competition with China and Russia is real, where we need Ambassadors in place to project U.S. power, to assist and protect U.S. citizens, and to promote our companies.

We are less safe when our national security Agencies are so underwhelmed. We owe it to the Senate and the American people to fix this problem.

I am pleased to be supporting the nomination of Ambassador Daniel Kritenbrink to be Assistant Secretary of State for East Asia and Pacific Affairs. In recent years, and on a bipartisan basis, the United States has reassessed and rebalanced our approach to the Indo-Pacific to take into account the reality of our competitive relationship with China. So this is a region rich with pressing challenges from North Korea's nuclear and missile programs to a rollback in human rights and democracy across the region.

Ambassador Kritenbrink will be able to draw from decades of experience in the region to lead our efforts in this area.

Also pleased to be supporting Dr. Karen Donfried's nomination, which is a testament to the Biden administration's effort to rebuild the transatlantic relationship, which was significantly damaged by the last administration.

I know that Dr. Donfried's knowledge and experience—including previously as the Senior Director for European Affairs at the National Security Council—will serve the country well as we seek to renew that transatlantic relationship.

These are issues dealing with Russia, Turkey, Belarus, our support for Ukraine. I hear all the time in speeches about support for these countries. Wouldn't it be nice to have the person—forget about nice. Isn't it critical to have the person that can be promoting that view?

There is Monica Medina to be the Assistant Secretary for Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs. I am convinced that she is eminently qualified, including the time she spent as Principal Deputy Under Secretary of Oceans and Atmosphere at the Department of Commerce and in a broad variety of leadership roles focused on ocean conservation, environmental policy, and science.

Likewise, I am pleased to support Ambassador Mary Catherine Phee to be the Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs. As I said, we have an enormous challenge on the African continent.

I support Todd Robinson to be a leader as the Assistant Secretary of State for the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs. If we want to deal with the coyotes whom my colleague was talking about, let's put somebody in a position to go after them. I know this work is critical to our international efforts to combat narcotics, to deal with fentanyl, and to deal with the trafficking routes that extend through Mexico and all the way back to China.

Then there is Jessica Lewis, finally. It is with a mixture of deep pride and some sorrow that this body will consider the nomination of Ms. Lewis to be the next Assistant Secretary of State for the Bureau of Political-Military Affairs.

Almost 20 years ago, I hired Jessica for her first job on Capitol Hill as my

foreign policy adviser and staff director of the House Foreign Affairs Committee's Western Hemisphere Subcommittee, of which I was ranking member. After moving to the Senate and working for Senator Harry Reid for nearly a decade, she took up the staff director position of the Foreign Relations Committee. Throughout her tenure in all of these positions, Members, Senators, and staff on both sides of the aisle benefited from her deep knowledge of foreign policy, her leadership, and indeed her love for Congress itself, with all its nuanced rules and procedures.

Jessica is recognized across party lines as one of the most effective and trusted leaders on Capitol Hill. She is a trailblazer for women in national security. When approved by the Senate—and I have no doubt she will be—she will be the first woman confirmed to hold this position.

It would be impossible to catalogue all of her accomplishments, from getting countless bills passed through the committee and into law, supporting efforts to conduct serious oversight of the executive branch regardless of which party is in power, to striving to build a truly diverse staff of the Foreign Relations Committee. I have no doubt she will bring her commitment to mentorship, integrity, and public service to the State Department as well.

So we expect to see her, after she gets confirmed, back here answering questions and being part of this incredibly important job that she will be doing in bringing political and military affairs together.

I hope that we do not have to go through these 100 nominees, through 2-hour sessions of each nominee, in order to get them to start working for U.S. national security. That is what is at stake here.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Tennessee.

COLLIERVILLE SHOOTING

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Mr. President, as I come to the floor today, I want to acknowledge that we have an active shooter situation in Collierville, TN, right outside of Memphis. We have spoken with authorities. We have worked with State and Federal authorities. We are aware that there are 13 individuals who have been shot. The shooter is dead. But we are very grateful for law enforcement that have stepped up in this situation and prayerful for those who have been adversely impacted and have been victims of this shooting situation.

Mr. President, I ask that I have permission to complete my remarks before the scheduled vote.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

BUSINESS BEFORE THE SENATE

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Mr. President, this week, we have heard from many of my Democratic colleagues about the various ways that Republicans have